

0. "CHILDHOOD'S HOUR" - Story Preface

**1. "CHILDHOOD'S HOUR"**

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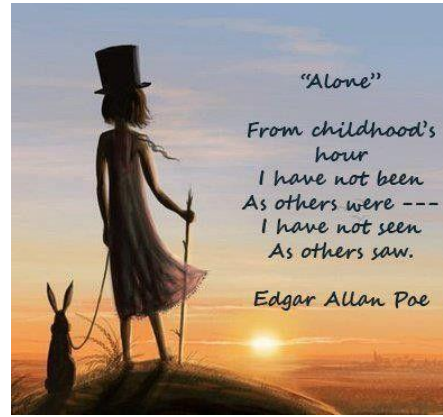
4. POE and HIS WRITINGS

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"Alone"

From childhood's  
hour  
I have not been  
As others were ---  
I have not seen  
As others saw.

Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe had a difficult childhood. Alone much of the time, he wrote a poem about growing-up very differently than other children. Some of the words, from that poem, are superimposed here on the art of Jeremiah D. Morelli, a middle-school teacher and artist from Germany. Image copyright, [Jeremiah Morelli](#), all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with his art.

Edgar Allan Poe met sorrow and death at a young age. They became two of his main traveling companions throughout his life's journey.

One of three children, Edgar Poe was born in a Boston house on the 19th of January, 1809. He did not have his middle name at birth. That came later, after his parents died and he was placed in a foster home.

At a time when acting was not a respected profession, Poe's parents were actors. David Poe, Jr. - poor and destitute - abandoned his young family when Edgar was a baby. Elizabeth, an actress known to audiences as "an enchanting creature," was left to manage her unenchanted life the best she could.

While living in Richmond, Virginia - when her son was not-yet-three - Eliza (as she was known) began to cough-up blood. Soon her health was overwhelmed by the ravages of tuberculosis (then known as "consumption," one of the "most dreaded diseases of the 19th century"). It was hard for her small children to watch their mother succumb to what became a fatal illness.

Three young Poes were now without parents. Frances ("Fanny") Allan, a childless woman who had been fond of Elizabeth, agreed to care for Edgar. His siblings (Henry and Rosalie) went to separate families.

Separation thereby joined sorrow and death as another of Edgar's lifelong companions.

John Allan, Fanny's husband, believed young Eddy needed a good education - but - he was unwilling to adopt Poe. He gave the lad a middle name but rejected the idea of formally calling Poe his son.

Rejection thus joined separation, sorrow and death as another member of Poe's emotional reference points. Wherever Eddy went, for the rest of his life, those four traveling companions were frequently in view.

Frances Allan showered her young foster son with affection, but John Allan remained tough and blunt. Not a kind man, even to his wife, he had numerous affairs - within his own home - after Frances also became ill with TB.

Later in life, when Edgar reflected on his childhood years, he wrote these words in a poem he called "Alone."

*From childhood's hour I have not been  
As others were - I have not seen  
As others saw - I could not bring  
My passions from a common spring -  
From the same source I have not taken  
My sorrow - I could not awaken  
My heart to joy at the same tone -  
And all I lov'd - I lov'd alone -*

He "lov'd alone" because he was *left* alone. Abandoned by his father, orphaned by his mother and left in a troubled state by Frances Allan - who also died of consumption - Poe's childhood was neither completely secure nor happy.

Those facts would have lifelong consequences for him.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/-CHILDHOOD-S-HOUR-The-Raven>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/-CHILDHOOD-S-HOUR-The-Raven>

## Questions 2 Ponder

### Does Sorrow Help to Shape a Great Poet?

When he was a young boy, Edgar Allan Poe's father left his young family. Not long after, Poe's mother died. Sorrow and death, coupled with separation and loss, became Poe's companions during his life's journey. They also became themes in his written works.

Poe's parents were actors, and his mother was known to audiences as "an enchanting creature." Actors in the early 19th century, however, were members of a low-paying profession. Poe's family was therefore poor.

Eliza Poe became ill with tuberculosis (called "consumption" at the time) which ravaged her body. Coughing-up blood was just the first of many symptoms she endured and her small children observed.

Why is "acting" such a celebrated profession today compared to its status in the early 19th century?

What might explain that drastic change in attitude—from condescension to elevation?

What might explain the 19th-century use of the word "consumption" to describe tuberculosis?

What does Poe mean when he writes that he "could not bring my passions from a common spring?"

Do you think Poe's life circumstances helped him to become a poet? Why, or why not?

Do you think the overwhelming emotional environment, in which Poe spent his childhood, shaped him into a poet whose themes still resonate with 21st-century people?

## Media Stream



### Edgar Allan Poe - Birthplace

Photo of Poe's birthplace, online courtesy Boston Public Library via Flickr.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Edgar-Allan-Poe-Birthplace>



### Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins Poe - Edgar's Mother

Image of Eliza Poe, online courtesy Poe Museum.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Elizabeth-Arnold-Hopkins-Poe-Edgar-s-Mother>



### Poe - Richmond, Virginia

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Frances Allan - Poe's Foster-Mother

Image of Frances ("Fanny") Allan, online Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Frances-Allan-Poe-s-Foster-Mother>



### John Allan - Poe's Foster Father

Image of John Allan, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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### Tuberculosis - "Consumption"

Video clip by VOA, online via YouTube.

View this asset at:

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